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ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S DAILY ACTIVITY REPORT

ARA/AND

October 2, 1998

(C) VENEZUELA: Ambassador Meets Saez. Ambassador Maisto met Irene Saez on September 25 only two hours after the meeting with Chavez. Saez insists that she is, "the only candidate capable of building the political consensus and alliances necessary to govern Venezuela." Although Saez is an independent candidate, she has the political support of the established COPEI party. Saez believes that this connection will pay off after the November 8 regional elections. She stated that she stands for democracy and constitutional government, and optimistically hopes to strengthen and rebuild the Venezuelan system while she is the next President. (Caracas 002958, DMBrown)

(U) VENEZUELA: Closing Gap in Presidential Race. El Universal newspaper published the latest Dataanalysis poll on the presidential candidates. A nationwide poll of 1,200 people showed that Chavez had fallen from 45.7% to 41.6%. Salas strengthened his second place position by rising from 27% to 31.3%. Luis Alfaro edged into third place with 8.2%, pushing former Miss Universe Irene Saez into fourth place with 7.8% of voters. The poll seems to support the Salas belief that October will be the month in which he closes the gap between himself and Chavez. (DMBrown)

(SBU) Meeting with Colombian Human Rights Advocates: Phil Chicola chaired a meeting with DRL, PRM, INL and representatives from Colombian Human Rights organizations, Amnesty International, WOLA and Human Rights Watch. The Colombians are here to participate in a seminar on the Hill about Human Rights issues. The participants outlined the serious problems facing Colombia including the lack of an adequate military justice program, impunity, persecution of human rights advocates, the rise of paramilitary groups, and the complicity of GOC security forces in aiding paramilitaries in their activities. They also expressed their concern that the Pastrana Government has not fully outlined its human rights policy. The Colombians discussed the peace process and improved human rights as two different issues. AND suggested that they were linked and recommended that the activists contact Vice President Bell who is the Ombudsman for human rights issues in the Pastrana government. (Hoey)

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